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 SUBJECT: POLITICAL ANALYSTS AND OPERATIVES REVIEW ELECTION RESULTS

1. (U) Summary: TDY Poloff attended a July 6 seminar at the Colegio de Mexico in which representatives of all three major political parties, as well as academics, discussed the outcome of the elections. As of the time of the seminar, PAN candidate Felipe Calderon was ahead in the final vote count, which was then still underway. While most speakers expressed confidence in the electoral process, PRD representative Manuel Camacho, a deputy in the Mexican Congress, expressed displeasure, citing "irregularities" which he said made it impossible for the PRD to accept the results. Rosario Green, Secretary General of the PRI, discussed why she felt her party did not fare well in the elections citing, for instance, PRI candidate Roberto Madrazo's negative image in the press. Meanwhile, Juan Molinar, a PAN deputy in the Mexican Congress, discussed what he saw as a "divided Mexico" both during and after the 2006 race. End Summary.

2. (U) Manuel Camacho of the PRD was the first of the three party representatives to speak. He echoed AML0's assertion in a morning press conference that alleged irregularities in the vote count could not be ignored and that the PRD would not accept the results. Camacho maintained that the PRD was not seeking to nullify the election, but rather would pursue legal redress through the Federal Electoral Tribunal to demand a vote-by-vote recount. He also reminded the audience that the PRD would hold an "informative assembly" on Saturday, July 8 in Mexico's central plaza, the Zscales. Insisting the gathering would be peaceful, Camacho claimed that the event would be used to "work towards their goal" of securing a recount.

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3. (U) Rosario Green, Secretary General of the PRI, spoke next. Green spent most of her time discussing why PRI candidate Roberto Madrazo fared so poorly in the election. She cited a "systematic attack" by the written press on Madrazo's image. This negative press, she claimed, succeeded in painting Madrazo as a corrupt politician, which harmed his numbers at the polls. Green noted that problems with other PRI politicians, such as the governor of Puebla, negatively impacted Madrazo's image. Green also put some blame on current President Vicente Fox, claiming his TV spots promoting PAN achievements unfairly bolstered Felipe Calderon's candidacy (to Madrazo's detriment).

4. (U) Perhaps most interesting was her internal assessment of what went wrong with the Madrazo campaign. Green admitted that the Madrazo campaign had waited too long to form a strategy that was clearly different from that of the other two parties. This, she claimed, left him in a weak position to attract undecided voters who were turned off by the left-right "extremes" of AMLO and Calderon, respectively. As for the future of the PRI, Green -- who won election to the Senate on Sunday -- said the party would not disappear but rather would reform. She said it should use its position in Congress to regain public confidence and regenerate the prestige it has lost. She ended with the usual PRI refrain that the country is caught in the middle of a fight between the right and the left, and that the PRI will remain to provide a middle-ground.

5. (U) Juan Molinar of the PAN spoke mainly about his view of the state of the country after this election. He claimed that the 2006 elections were probably "the most democratic Mexico has ever seen." While he noted that Felipe Calderon was then leading the official count, he did exercise caution and refrained from claiming a PAN victory. Rather, he commented that Mexico needed to unite after a very divisive election. He remarked that while campaigns are meant to show differences between candidates, the result of the campaign has been to unveil ideological and social-demographic rifts in the country, particularly between the north and south.

6. (U) Academics present also made some interesting comments on the election. Fernando Escalante of the Colegio de Mexico remarked that Mexico's past few presidential elections have been increasingly dramatic. He claimed that Mexico appeared to be in fact two countries, "Mxico Norte" and "Mxico Sur" (North Mexico and South Mexico) with the North favoring Caldern, and the South, Lopez Obrador. While the country may be divided, however, Escalante said the one thing both sides have in common is the PRI, and that the PRI would have to be the party to bring the two polarized sides back together. Alberto Arnaut, also of the Colegio de Mexico, pointed out that it was not only a North-South divide, but also a rural-urban divide that has split the country. He pointed out that

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despite these divisions, whoever finally wins the election will have to deal with a divided Congress in which it will be very difficult to form a majority.

7. (U) Comment: The 2006 elections certainly have laid bare some considerable geographic, social and economic divisions within Mexico. While yesterday's event was simply a first take on what will likely be a prolonged national debate, we are heartened that the PAN representative recognized the significance of these divisions. In an election this close, the results contain a message as much for the apparent winner as for the apparent loser.

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